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Title of Document: Exceptional Service Coordination for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs in Alternative Residential Placement

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Applicability: Disabilities and Special Needs Boards/Provider Agencies

Persons with disabilities and special needs may require services that cannot be met by either the regional centers or county disabilities and special needs boards. These persons, nevertheless, should be seen as appropriate for DDSN services and receive service coordination from the county disabilities and special needs boards in cooperation with the state office.

An alternative residential placement is a group home facility or therapeutic family home setting for children or adults operated outside the DSN system network of county disabilities and special needs boards. The service coordinator should develop a service plan that outlines the agency or combination of agencies that should provide needed services in cooperation with the services provided through the DDSN service system (cost share/shared funding service plan) and authorized by the Office of Behavioral Supports in the state office. The service coordinator, with the assistance of the DDSN state office, will actively advocate for the implementation of the plan and will utilize all interagency agreements and referrals such as the S.C. Protection and Advocacy System for People with Disabilities Inc., the Children's Case Resolution System (CCRS), or the Interagency System for Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC) to achieve the necessary services. Waiting lists, both DDSN's and other agencies', will need to be considered; however, urgency of need will continue to be used in placing individuals in alternative residential placement in priority order.

People with complex needs may not be able to participate in services usually provided through the DDSN system even with the assistance of other agencies. In such cases, the Department may enter into an interagency agreement for an amount not greater than the amount of state funds DDSN would spend for an individual in residential care as part of an interagency funding pool to purchase services in alternative placement.

To qualify for this funding, the person must meet the eligibility requirements of the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs and have needs that cannot be met within the DDSN service

system. An Interagency Service Plan still must be developed by the service coordinator in conjunction with the DDSN state office and other involved agencies and receive funding approval by the Deputy Director of Administration and the Director of Behavioral Supports before alternative placement is provided. Approval is subject to the availability of appropriate fiscal resources, concurrence with placement resolution, if indicated, and agreement with Interagency Service Plan.

The Department of Disabilities and Special Needs will cooperate with other agencies to develop the needed specialized service providers within the State of South Carolina whenever possible. Service coordinators will utilize the same advocacy and coordinating agencies in advocating for an interagency cost share/shared funding plan in cooperation with the state office.

Legislation required that the Office of the Governor join with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and other key agencies to form the Interagency System for Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC). The Division of Managed Treatment Services for Children (MTS) was established at the DSS in July 1996 to serve emotionally and behaviorally disturbed children in DSS custody who reside in, or who are being considered for out-of-home therapeutic (alternative residential) placements. Children who are eligible for DDSN services may be taken into DSS custody and may be eligible to receive services in a therapeutic placement funded by ISCEDC. DDSN is one of several agencies that contribute annually to the ISCEDC fund in order for DSS to provide out-of-home therapeutic services to children in their custody with emotional and behavioral disturbances. Individual interagency cost share agreements are not made on DDSN individuals receiving alternative residential placement services through ISCEDC.

As a statement of principle, the Department will not focus on the primary diagnosis, i.e., mental retardation versus some other disability, in determining a person's eligibility for service coordination or other services. If a person has mental retardation and is determined eligible to receive services, DDSN will provide the service coordination necessary to work out a shared service or cost share/shared funding plan to meet the individual's needs for alternative placement. However, DDSN will continue to discourage the improper labeling of persons in order to make them eligible for DDSN services.

The Department's eligibility criteria include individuals with mental retardation or related disabilities. A low IQ of 70 or below is not, in and of itself, enough to establish Departmental eligibility. Persons must also show significant and concurrent delays in adaptive functioning and other evidence sufficient to demonstrate that the IQ and adaptive behavior are a true reflection of the individual's ability and not a result of lack of cooperation, temporary emotional disability or behavioral disturbance, lack of educational achievement, or other such factors which may temporarily lower a person's score on an IQ test and suppress one's adaptive functioning abilities.

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